

PLANE NEWS

Fall 2001

Airports Shut Down During Emergency

Pipers and Stearmans sat quietly in their hangars. Cessnas and Mooneys, chained to their tie-downs, glistened in the midday sun. Commercial aircraft, corporate jets and general aviation planes—grounded after terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. Tuesday, September 11, 2001.

All eight County airports shut down and instituted security measures. Gillespie Field Manager Noreen Crane, for example, set a roadblock at the terminal entrance and her staff checked each car that approached. At Palomar, Manager Floyd Best arranged delivery of concrete barriers to block parking spaces in front of the airline terminal, administration building and control tower.

By Friday airliners were flying again, air taxis and other corporate aircraft were flying. As of press time VFR (visual flight rules) flights were restricted in the enhanced Class B air space.

“It was amazing how quickly the nation’s air space was emptied,” said Airports Director Rick Jenkins. “And we implemented our security plans quickly.”

Jenkins said new security measures are in place but would not discuss them individually. He referred to them as “invisible” and not something a casual observer would notice.

Palomar Airport Manager Floyd Best clarified what customers can expect. “Restrictions on curbside loading and unloading around the terminal area have reduced available parking. We really want to encourage the public to use available shuttle and taxi services to get to and from the facility,” he said. “Signage, barricades, and security-related announcements have been increased to delineate what little available parking we have, but parking solutions are being discussed and we are hoping to make significant progress with this soon.”

Day-to-day business on the airport continues while ongoing contingency measures are implemented. McClellan-Palomar Airport Operations personnel conduct regular safety and security checks of the airport perimeter and aircraft movement areas to ensure that the airport operates safely and efficiently.

“Our airport maintenance folks also conduct frequent daily inspections as well,” Best continued. “ARFF [Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting] personnel continue these inspections during normal hours. Our immediate fire fighting response is supported by the Carlsbad Fire Department should they be required. Security guards are here round-the-clock.

Under current security measures, law enforcement presence as provided by the Carlsbad Police Department has been stepped up, Best indicated. “We will be doing more counter-terrorism and security training together in future.”

Operations at Borrego Valley Airport and Fallbrook Airpark were nearly back to normal by the first week in October. Gillespie Field, which is in the enhanced Class B air space, was down about 28 percent from the previous month and Ramona was down some 55 percent.

Crane answers dozens of calls at her Gillespie Field office each day from pilots wanting the latest news about when rules change. Richard Selinger does the same at Ramona, which is barely inside the enhanced space.



Al Belcher uses forklift to move concrete security barrier into place at Palomar Airport.



Airport Manager Noreen Crane chats with visitor at Gillespie Field entrance. The airport was on full security alert.

Fleet Week Draws Thousands



Red, white and blue were the colors of the day at Gillespie Field's Fleet Week celebration September 29. More than 4,000 people joined in festivities honoring military men and women and their families.

With many Fleet Week events cancelled for security reasons, patriotism found a home in El Cajon. Music and flags filled the air.



The East County Visitors Bureau sponsored the event. Displays included historical military aircraft, an ASTREA helicopter and fire trucks galore. There was a Kid Zone, Native American dancers, bands, and chorales, as well as food craft booths.

New Flight Pattern At Gillespie

Pilots flying touch-and-go on runway 27L at Gillespie Field have a new noise abatement route. The new rule takes effect November 1.

"When pilots use runway 27L, they now need to make their left turn over State Route 125," said Airport Manager Noreen Crane. "That turn should be at 12,000 feet MSL [mean sea level]."

Crane said the change is in response to local residents' concerns. She said implementing this plan required a great deal of cooperation from the community and an environmental report from the County.

Destination San Diego: Eldon Anderson—Gillespie Original

To Eldon Anderson, Gillespie Field is more than just an airport—it is history, personal history. Anderson, you see, was there at the beginning.

In the spring of 1942, with World War II underway, the Marine Corps decided to move its parachute training center from Lakehurst, New Jersey to San Diego. Camp Gillespie was built to teach young Marines how to jump into combat. Anderson was assigned to be part of the group to run the six-week training program, which included rugged daily physical conditioning, parachute packing and six jumps to complete the course.

“We had two towers with chutes attached,” Anderson said. “Trainees would strap into a harness, be hoisted to the top and then drop to the ground with the canopy slowing their fall.”

Trainees lived at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot and were trucked to Gillespie every day for qualification parachute jumps. Later, barracks and training buildings were built on site. “We jumped about 60 students every day, each squad with an instructor,” Anderson said. After graduation, students were shipped to Camp Elliot to join a battalion for combat training.

He remembers one of the early trainees, Major Victor Krulak.

“The major invited his wife to watch his first jump from an airplane. She showed up with their young son in her arms. ‘I’ll be the first one out of the plane,’ Krulak told his bride. He’d forgotten to tell her that they first dropped a dummy to test wind direction. As the dummy tumbled out of the aircraft and made a disastrous landing, Mrs. Krulak thought it was her husband! A few minutes later, Krulak made his successful first jump.”

That baby in her arms went on to a military career that led him to become Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The drop zone where Krulak and other trainees landed had been purchased from a local rancher. Cajon Speedway sits on the property today and the ranch house is gone. But living there at the time was Esther Imig, the rancher’s daughter.

Anderson met Esther during his forays to the drop zone and they married right after the war. They recently celebrated their 55th anniversary.

In 1961 Anderson retired from the military and moved back to San Diego, just a touch-and-go from Gillespie Field. By then, the County owned the airport and it was growing into the facility it is today. He went to work in the County Planning Department, where one of his assignments was the realignment of Bradley Ave., the southern edge of the airport.

Now, at 81, Anderson looks back on his days at Camp Gillespie with fondness. As he sits in today’s airport administration building, he remembers the men he served with and the job they did.

“Those troopers [we trained] were among the first to make assault landings on Guadalcanal,” he said. “Survivors from that operation continued up to Bougainville and the other islands in the Solomons. Among those troops were Medal of Honor winners and future generals.”

*For more history of Gillespie Field, visit the County Airports web site:
<http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/dpw/airports/gillespie.htm>.*



Eldon Anderson and the plaque he purchased for Gillespie Field to honor the Marine Corps and the airport.



FAA representative Eric Vermeeren (center) presents grants to Gillespie Field Manager Noreen Crane and Airports Director Rick Jenkins. Gillespie Field got \$1.94 million for paving runway 27L and Ramona Airport got \$2.2 million for its runway extension project.

Compass Points

We've made excellent progress with several projects at County Airports this year. After nearly two decades of planning, we're finally starting the runway project at Ramona. We hope to start construction of a sewer to serve the airport soon. An air traffic control tower is scheduled for construction in Spring, 2002.

We've hired a contractor to design reconstruction of Runway 27L at Gillespie and another for our airport layout plan narrative update.

Design is in progress for reconstruction of Taxiway "A" at Palomar and we've been funded for a noise compatibility study at that airport.

We anticipate completion of a fuel facility and start of hangar construction by several lessees at Fallbrook. We also expect to hire a consultant this fall to complete a master plan study of Fallbrook.

We hope to complete a request for proposals for hangar development at Borrego Valley Airport in the near future.

There are a couple of other important issues. The first is our recently completed Compliance 2000 inspection. We inspected nearly 1,000 hangars and businesses at our airports in an effort to ensure we operate safely and in compliance with applicable FAA, environmental, including storm water, and other regulations. Our goal was to help airport users comply with these various regulations. The inspection was very successful thanks to your cooperation and assistance. The FAA senior compliance officer was so impressed with the inspection process that he intends to use it as an example for other airports. We intend to repeat these inspections on a regular basis to ensure hangars are utilized primarily for the storage of aircraft and continue to comply with applicable regulations.

Second is our Runway Incursion Prevention Program. As most of you know, the FAA is extremely interested in the prevention of runway incursions at all airports. We are currently working cooperatively with the FAA and airport users to enhance our Runway Incursion Prevention Program at County Airports.

We've made tremendous progress in this regard. There is still more to do. Our goal is to make our airports as safe as possible and serve as a model for others. We need your support for these efforts to be successful.

Tail Section

The reorganized **Gillespie Field Youth in Aviation Scholarship Fund, Inc.** is up and running. Its purpose is to award scholarships to worthy students pursuing careers in aviation-related fields. New officers are: **Tom Black**, President; **Mark Lewis**, Vice-President; **Jan Berry**, Secretary; and **Marie Woods**, Treasurer. For meeting dates and times, contact the World War II Flying Museum at (619) 448-4505.



*Display at Gillespie Field's
Administration Building honoring victims
of September 11 attacks in New York and
Washington, D.C.*